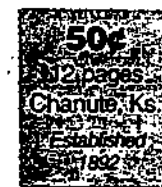




The Chanute Tribune

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Site: Mid-America Ref.
ID# KSD084091545
Break: 13.0
Other: 8-12-98



Cost of refinery cleanup climbs

Price tag for project now up to \$6 million

Kris Knowles
Tribune writer

The number keeps getting bigger.

When all is said and done, the cost to federal taxpayers for cleaning up the contaminated refinery site at the north edge of Chanute will be at least \$6 million.

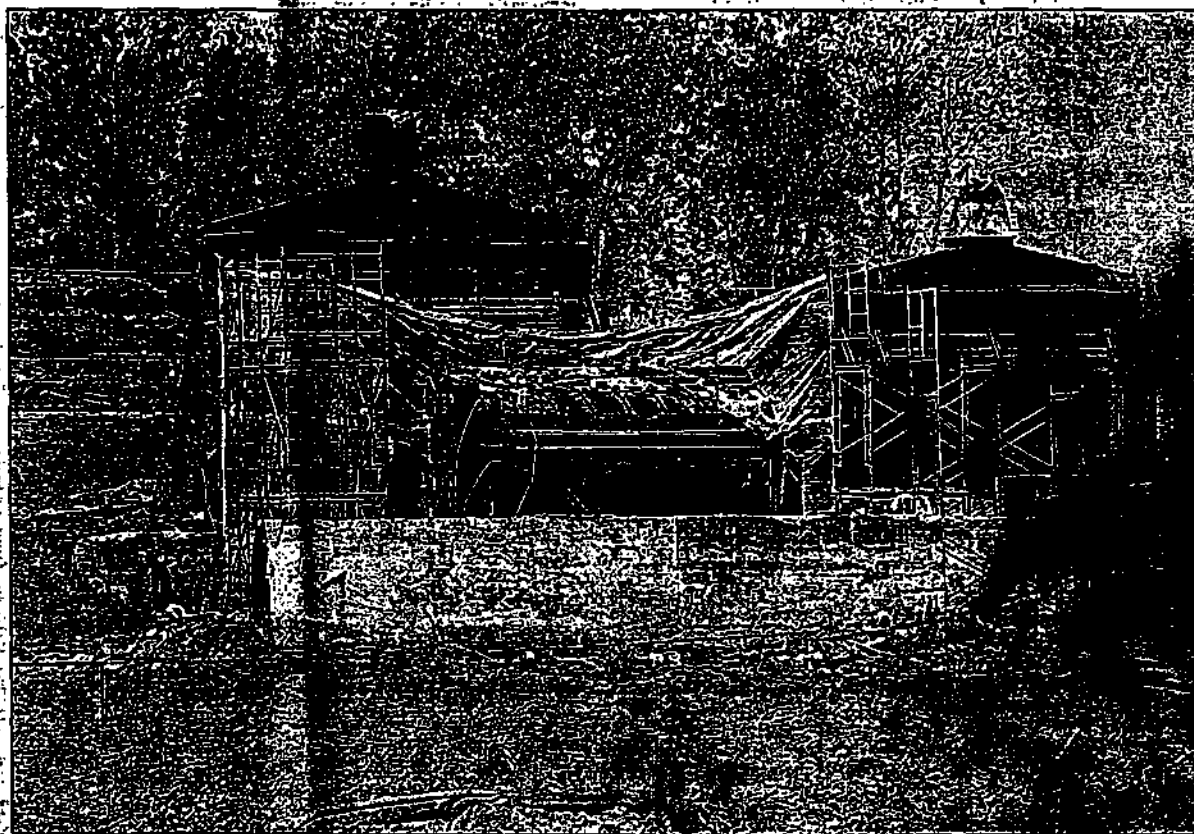
The last estimate published by the Tribune in February was about \$4.7 million, including \$3.5 million for the current EPA cleanup and \$1.2 million for a partial cleanup in 1994.

Janice Kroone, the Environmental Protection Agency's on site coordinator, said those numbers didn't include the cost of removing some buried material containing heavy metals. She said she could not yet release the projected cost of that work other than to say it will be more than \$1 million.

Other additional costs include removal of a sludge pit on an adjoining property (\$200,000) and some asbestos removal (\$100,000).

Taxpayers are likely to be stuck with the bill. The property is owned by a trust that purchased it at a county tax sale long after the refinery had ceased operations. Kroone said EPA officials can't locate anyone connected with the trust, and the trust apparently doesn't have any money anyway.

Meanwhile, cleanup work is continuing with the removal of asbestos from the inside of an old refinery boiler and two burners. Kroone said some metal salvagers working at the site in 1995 pierced the skins of the boiler and burners, exposing asbestos linings.



A large plastic tarp has been hung to block the wind where cleanup workers are removing asbestos from an old refinery boiler and burners at the north edge of Chanute. Rob Morgan/Tribune

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SUPERFUND RECORDS

...the young boy said it may be salvageable.

City compost pile causes big stink

WILSON - Ernal Francis has lived in his home in Wilson 23 years. In the past year, since the city began a community compost pile, his life hasn't been the same. The pile of grass clippings, covering less than a quarter of an acre, sits across the street from Francis, about 100 feet from his home.

Francis, 86, says the pile stinks. He sees it as an eyesore, too. Last week his complaints were before the city council, which plans to solicit comments from others and then review their options.

"They claim they're going to move it, but they never have," Francis said.

The city clerk said the council has talked about putting the compost on the city's baseball fields this fall.



Members of the Army National Guard repair the Welcome to Chanute sign along U.S. 169 highway Monday afternoon. They are on their two-week guard duty and after inventorying tools and equipment began some community projects, including fixing the sign that was blown down earlier and spraying weeds on Main Street. Rob Morgan/Tribune

Smoking: Continued from Page 1

caught possessing tobacco products in the city was set by a 1994 ordinance, but police had rarely followed up with fines.

Now, with police in each high school, students know Crane and his fellow officers won't be lenient. A first offense garners a \$55 fine plus \$37 in court costs. The cost of a second offense rises to \$137, and a third offense is \$187.

"Money talks," Crane said. "One kid came back to me and said, 'Officer Crane, you gave me a good reason to quit.'"

Other Wichita high schools have reported a similar drop in students caught with tobacco.

"The threat's there, and that has been well advertised," said East High School Principal Katie McHenry.

At East, school officials and the officer save the fine as a last resort. They prefer to order students caught smoking to do community service.

The Derby School District is

tougher on its students caught with tobacco on school grounds. They are fined \$52 and given in-school suspension. If the student can't pay the ticket, Derby Municipal Court Judge Stan Singleton is willing to shame them, ordering students caught with tobacco to stand in front of the school building with a sign that says it is illegal for people under 18 to possess tobacco.

Even with fines and threats, some students still smoke, said Ty McNeill, a sophomore at Maize High School and a non-smoker.

Smoking is still an "image thing," he said. As for getting caught, "nobody's afraid of it, really."

In some districts, the officers are more likely to confiscate the cigarettes or chewing tobacco, some students said. But some parents have praised the efforts of the officers and school districts.

"Anything that could keep kids from smoking is a good idea," said parent Crystal McGuire.

Refinery: Continued from Page 1

Cleanup workers in protective suits are wetting down the asbestos, placing it in double bags and then into a lined dumpster. It will then be taken to Allen County landfill which is an approved site for asbestos disposal.

Removal of contaminated soil is also continuing. Kroone said the northeast corner of the site has petroleum contamination as deep as 13 feet, down to a layer of clay.

There was a lot of spillage here over the years," she said.

Elsewhere, only a foot of soil is being removed, down to a layer of sandstone.

When the work is done, Kroone said there will still be contamination in the sandstone and clay beneath the site, which will require deed restrictions on how the property can be used.

There is just no way you can

excavate it all out," she said.

But that doesn't mean the property can't be used. She said a slab foundation for a building could be constructed, but deep digging for a basement would not be allowed.

Concerning ownership, there are enough back taxes owed on the property that the county could take control of the property. Understandably, Kroone said county officials are concerned they might have to bear some cleanup responsibility or cost.

But that is not the case, she said. A change in the law several years ago would shield the county from responsibility.

Kroone said EPA attorneys are working with the county to provide assurances that the site could be used, perhaps for a new business.

"There's a lot of uses for the property," she said.

it," Gough said.

"It was about the strangest thing I think I've ever seen. It just shredded the tents. And what was really strange is the hail didn't break the fiberglass on the boats that were out, but it tore up the seat cushion."

Water: Continued from Page 1

must create something simple.

If the tested water has shown a violation or a contamination level that exceeds safe standards, the report must explain potential health effects. It also will tell people what sources their water comes from - lakes, rivers or wells pumping water from deep or not-so-deep underground.

Occasional water problems are not unusual in Kansas: A total 228 public water systems had a violation of some drinking water regulation during 1997. That's about 20 percent of the state's 1,122 systems. State health officials said the reports show monitoring has been successful so far.

"I'd be more concerned if we didn't see the exceedences," said Greg Crawford, health department spokesman. "You go a couple years where you didn't hear anything and you wonder what's wrong."

Rural water worries

Small communities, strapped for funding and often with decaying infrastructure, face the toughest challenge of all public water providers. Coolidge, for example, a Hamilton County municipality of 90 near the Colorado border, was cited four times last year by the state for exceeding the standard for radionuclides in its water. The contamination stems from naturally occurring uranium affecting groundwater.

Sterling, a city of 2,115 in Rice County, recently warned residents that drinking water was unsafe for babies up to 6 months old. Nitrate levels in one city well exceeded safe limits for infants. Officials believe the problem stems from fer-

Labette County Emergency preparedness director Keith Stammer agreed that the storm was unusual.

"You're talking about a severe thunderstorm in August. It's very odd in itself to have a hail-producing thunderstorm in August."

fertilizer applied in nearby fields that eventually leached into groundwater wells placed about 90 feet below the surface.

The city has options - buy water elsewhere, drill a new well, treat the water - complete with hefty price tags, said City Manager Randy Riggs, noting that "a good handful" of other Kansas towns have similar problems.

A few days after Sterling officials notified residents, companies selling in-home water treatment systems began making sales sweeps through neighborhoods. Riggs said the water's not a threat to those older than 6 months and it seemed like businesses were "pouncing on the opportunity."

Kansas' record of no water-borne sickness in recent years surpassed most neighboring states, according to the National Research Council. No acute health problems resulted from contamination problems last year, and utilities have moved quickly to fix problems, said Ron Hammerschmidt, director of the state's Bureau of Environment.

Critics, however, see the state as too complacent with its testing, especially on cancer-causing agents like atrazine. The herbicide used on corn and sorghum is commonly found in eastern Kansas rivers used by city water supplies.

"I'm very concerned about the atrazine levels in the water," said Terry Shistar of the Kansas chapter of the Sierra Club.

State employees check rivers and streams at certain times of the year. But atrazine and other herbicides can be there, and in greater amounts, at other times. Shistar said farm industry pressure hinders lawmakers from banning its use.